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INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff

From: The Acting Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management

Subject: SECRETARY-GENERAL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS TO THE STAFF OF THE UNITED NATIONS ON 20 DECEMBER 1991 AND STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE STAFF COMMITTEE AT HEADQUARTERS

The text of the farewell address to the staff of the United Nations by the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, and the statement by the President of the Staff Committee at Headquarters, Mr. Ronald Hewson, are reproduced herewith for the information of all staff members.

## I. Statement by the Secretary-General

Mr. President,

My dear colleagues and friends -

It is time for me to bid you farewell. We have come a long way together, and we have seen remarkable things in the course of our journey.

I wanted to meet with you today for one reason above all - to thank you, most warmly and from my heart, for what you have done on behalf of the United Nations through all the years of my tenure. Without your skills, your energy and your understanding of the problems and difficulties we have had to solve together, the achievements of the United Nations in these years would not have been possible. I have always felt that my work on the 38th Floor could not succeed without the efforts on the other 37 floors of this great building, together with those who serve the Organization at thousands of duty stations throughout the world.

Indeed, over the past 10 years, I have been deeply conscious - and confident - of the loyalty and dedication to the Organization's principles that motivated and infused the work of all of you, my dear colleagues. Your concerns were equally always in my mind.

During this time, we have seen history made. It is as if a political ice age had ended. As the ice has melted, there is already evidence of new beginnings, early fruit of a new climate.

It is, perhaps, hard to realize, now, just how much the role of the United Nations has changed and expanded since the early 1980s. I should like to reflect on this for a few moments. International peace-keeping, for example, which earlier had largely become limited to the process of maintaining cease-fires - with a thin blue line - has gained new dimensions of peacemaking and peace-building. I need hardly recount all the areas in which operations of unprecedented versatility, nature or scope have been mounted during these years. You know them all, since you have served in them. You know what innovative ideas, what improvization, what harnessing of resources, often at short notice, they have required. You know also their reward: how much human pain has been reduced and the waste of conflict averted by these operations.

Our responsibilities are still growing. At present in Cambodia, El Salvador, Western Sahara, and possibly Angola, we are already preparing to carry out central roles in the cause of peace and political progress. The world has come increasingly to seek new and varied forms of help from us in resolving international problems of all types. Yugoslavia is a current example. Who, 10 years ago, would have envisaged the United Nations dealing with such a range of questions, in such a diversity of contexts and places?

The United Nations family of organizations has also been in the forefront of efforts to reduce human distress because of poverty. Through our operational arms, we have reached out to the world's poorest and most deprived. We have done so, even though the larger question of poverty in the majority of the human race is yet to be addressed with the same sense of urgency as is evoked by political crises.

Dear colleagues and friends -

This has, indeed, been a time of hope, as the world has rediscovered the many possible roles of our Organization.

I repeat that none of this would have been possible without you, the men and women who constitute the staff of the Organization. For us, it has not only been an exciting period, but also one of greater responsibility. I know that most of us came to the United Nations because of a profound commitment - this was not to be "just another job", with whatever degree of prestige and material reward. We came to serve the United Nations through our conviction that there is no worthier form of service. We were prepared to accept sacrifices and hazards in pursuing the aims of the Charter of the United Nations.

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Earlier, I said that I have been constantly mindful of your concerns. I am quite aware that over the years some of you have had a sense of frustration as you have felt your talents and idealism have not been fully utilized. There was, in addition, deep consternation and even bewilderment, as hostile and clamorous voices berated the United Nations and those who serve it. You bore these unjust attacks without flinching.

In recent years, you have faced massive staff cuts and reorganizations, and have seen your conditions of service deteriorate, despite the best efforts of my administration to defend them. As you know, it is a peculiarity of our Organization that the authority for establishing conditions of service in it lies outside the administration. It is the intergovernmental machinery that is the arbiter. The management, however, must propose and recommend and this I have always tried to do.

Let me stress here how gratified I have been by the good relations that have been maintained between the staff and the management throughout my tenure.

We have, however, had to grapple daily with the limitations of financial resources and of lack of flexibility resulting from overly stringent regulations. I have pointed out these disabilities time and again in my reports and statements to the General Assembly and I would hope that my successor will not have to contend with them for long.

Indeed, a negative aspect of recent years has been the contrast between the lofty tasks entrusted to us by Governments of Member States, on the one hand, and, on the other, their attitude to the provision of resources to enable us to fulfil those mandates. One of my deepest regrets is that, despite all my efforts, the Organization remains in a precarious financial situation. I believe that there is a deep paradox currently in the policies of many Governments. They have not yet adjusted to the new international order - one in which cooperation through international agencies is increasingly necessary.

Despite all this, in these years of rapidly increasing responsibilities, you have never been found wanting. Often under onerous and dangerous conditions, in all corners of the world, you have lived up to the highest standards of international public service. Success in none of our operations would have been possible, without the ability, commitment and resourcefulness of you, the members of the Secretariat. I have seen for myself, many times, the creative manner in which staff members, often in remote and difficult areas, have furthered the objectives of United Nations mandates. All of us can take pride in the achievements of the Organization, for they have been the product of teamwork. All operations in the field have had to be supported, directly or indirectly, by those at headquarters duty stations.

I believe that even more complex and demanding challenges lie ahead for this Organization. Humanitarian emergencies may require still greater courage and commitment. New challenges already require a new way of thinking about our tasks, as the Organization becomes increasingly operational.

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These changes will require a major reappraisal of the way "the house" is run, so that policies and practices fully facilitate new emphases in United Nations service.

But, I have to say that if the Organization is to become fully effective, and to realize the goals of the Charter, then it will need the same dedication, loyalty and support from Governments, as it already enjoys from you, its staff.

Dear colleagues,

Although we seem to be on the threshold of a positive new era in international relations, the future of the United Nations is by no means clear. The retreat of the ice mass, which I mentioned earlier, has also exposed some basic realities: conflict, the actualities of ethnic strife, gross political and economic inequalities, disregard for human rights, and increasing threats to our planet, brought about both by mankind's cavalier conduct towards Earth's resources, and the needs of the growing human family. If our Organization is to maintain its relevance in the eyes of the world, then it must measure up to these issues with renewed vigour.

It may also be necessary for the Organization to defend and maintain its integrity. The United Nations belongs to all its members, and to you. It must remain committed, in an impartial manner, to carrying out the principles of its Charter. Its authority and status - which you have helped to establish through our varied tasks and operations - give it a unique character that must be jealously guarded. That moral authority is of vital practical importance in facilitating missions which might otherwise be impossible.

Dear colleagues,

The spirit of internationalism and dedication that dwells in this house is a priceless asset to the international community. In years to come, historians may conclude that, during our time together, we made a good start in the task of bringing our Organization back where it belongs - into the centre of international relations, while, at the same time, maintaining the integrity of vision that must guide its way.

It remains for me at this season to convey my personal greetings to you, to all United Nations staff members throughout the world, and to your families.

Dear colleagues,

It has been a joy and a source of deep satisfaction to work with you. I know you will give to the new Secretary-General the loyalty and devotion to duty which I have always been able to rely on. Confident of your loyal support to my successor, I can indeed leave with a tranquil mind.

As do all who depart from the service of the United Nations, I shall bear with me always the knowledge that it continues to represent the best hope of all humanity. I thank you.

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II. Statement by the President of the Staff Committee at Headquarters

I welcome the Secretary-General and my other colleagues to this very special event.

Mr. Secretary-General,

During your term of office more has happened to change the political face of the world than in any previous decade in human history.

Confronted by the political complexities, the dangers and threats of that decade, you have guided the work of this Organization with skill and quiet determination.

The United Nations, once treated with indifference, has gained new respect throughout the world. Its crucial role in the achievement and maintenance of peace is now universally recognized. We believe that your steady, strong leadership has played a major part in bringing about this new world-wide recognition of the importance of the Organization.

An ongoing crisis for the United Nations is the reluctance of some Member States to live up to their financial obligations under the Charter. We hope that the forthright document you recently placed before the Member States in this regard will bring those concerned to realize that this Organization needs more than praise and recognition to carry out the mandates the Assembly sets for it. It needs financial security, as do we, its staff. No less than a fire department, this Organization must have adequate resources at its disposal.

We congratulate you on obtaining the release of so many hostages, and we hope that our mutual efforts on behalf of our detained colleagues will soon bear fruit and that your successor will strenuously work for an end to the ongoing violations of the human rights of our many colleagues now deprived of their liberty.

We thank you for the concern you have shown for the welfare of the staff and for your efforts on our behalf. When we were under threat from the retrenchment exercise, you handled matters so that none of us lost our jobs; when General Service salaries were under threat as a result of the salary survey, you stood firmly by your prerogatives as Secretary-General; you have shown your concern for the status of women within the international civil service; and because of your acceptance of Judgement 482 of the Administrative Tribunal, many staff members who would have been denied continued service with

the Organization now qualify for career appointments, and we thus have reason to hope that soon all staff members, regardless of nationality, will have equal opportunities with the Organization. And during your term of office there has been a steady improvement in staff-management relations and the consultative process. These are just a few of the manifestations of your concern for the well-being of the staff of this Organization, and we are confident the new Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Ghali, will follow your example.

We do not know what you plan for your future, but we are sure that the knowledge and awareness you have gained as Secretary-General will be put to good use in the interests of the world community.

You may be sure we shall never forget working with you.

We wish you and Mrs. Pérez de Cuéllar the happiness and fulfilment you so richly deserve.

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